

Today's (Smart) Army Reservists...

# Are Waking Up

Interviews and photos by SSG David Abrams

**CSM** Collin Younger leaned forward in his chair and brought his fingertips together to punctuate his feelings on the state of today's Army Reserve. "Reserve Component soldiers have gotten a wake-up call in the last few years," he said. "The smart ones are waking up."

As the command sergeant major for both the Office, Chief, Army Reserve and the U.S. Army Reserve Command, Younger spends three out of five days away from his desk in Washington, DC, visiting Reserve units around the world to bring his message of tough but compassionate leadership to every NCO he meets.

With decreasing budgets but increasing missions, many Reserve units have found themselves thrust into new roles since being deployed to Southwest Asia in 1990.

"Desert Storm put the Reserve on the map," said the Component's top NCO in an interview with *The NCO Journal*. "Before that, two-thirds of the Reserve never thought they'd be activated. Now, they know they can wind up in Haiti, Africa, Macedonia or anywhere else. If they're not prepared when the bullets start flying, they're in trouble."

While Reserve missions continue, the drawdown noose is steadily being tightened. In January, the Army approved a Reserve plan to close seven Army Reserve Commands and reorganize the remaining 13. At the same time, 1994 was a banner year for Reserve deployments with call-ups to foreign lands like Haiti, Rwanda and Panama as well as close-to-home duties like fighting forest fires.

With so much turmoil and anxiety working its way into some Reserve units, Younger has his hands full guiding Reservists toward a sometimes uncertain future. He said he tries to spend the majority of his time talking face-to-face with NCOs, setting alarm clocks for wake-up calls wherever he goes. "We're going through a tremendous amount of change in the Army Reserve," he said. "Units are going away

or getting smaller and people are worried about whether or not they're going to have a job tomorrow.

"Senior NCOs have to be extremely busy communicating to their soldiers that when this is all settled, the good soldiers will have a job," he continued. "There are no guarantees, but if they're doing the right thing, they're going to stay."

In his travels, Younger said one of the questions he's most frequently asked concerns the difference between the two Reserve agencies he works for. Basically, OCAR (located in the Pentagon) is in the policy-making and budget business and USARC (headquartered in Atlanta) is in the command business for CONUS Reserve units, with the exception of those civil affairs and Special Forces units that fall under U.S.

Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command at Ft. Bragg, NC.

In addition to advising the Chief of Army Reserve on regulations, policies and guidance to more than 250,000 soldiers, Younger keeps his finger on the pulse of leadership in the Reserve Component.

When he visits units on weekend drills, he gathers together the NCO leadership and stresses the importance of enduring the tough years of cuts in personnel, equipment and training.

"In the Army of the 21st century, there will be no fat," Younger said. "There won't be two people for every job, there will be one quality person."

"If we don't articulate very clearly to our younger soldiers about what's going on in the Reserve, our attrition rate will skyrocket," he said. "Some of these soldiers have never gone through these changes and they think it's the end of the world. They say to themselves, 'The heck with it, I'm getting out.' Unfortunately, the poor-

performing soldiers are the ones who stick around. If we're not careful, we'll lose the good ones and we'll wind up with the bottom of the barrel."

Younger's advice to senior NCOs is to use themselves as examples when counseling soldiers who are worried about the future of the Reserve. "Show them that you didn't take off when things looked bad," he said. "We don't want soldiers



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who take off when the first shot is fired. We want people who stick around and fight."

Younger himself has been sticking around for nearly 35 years. Enlisting first in the Active-duty Army, he spent the majority of his time with the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii. When he joined the Army Reserve, he served with the 80th Training Division (a Troop Program Unit) in Richmond, VA, and then joined the Individual Ready Reserve. Now, in his capacity as the command sergeant major for OCAR and USARC, he's part of the Active Guard Reserve.

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After spending three-and-a-half decades in combat boots, Younger said he firmly believes in the old adage that the more the Army changes, the more it stays the same.

"Some of the things I saw early in my Army career are now resurfacing—such as, the drawdown," he said. "The Army is on a rollercoaster—it goes up and down. So, when something new comes along and there's a bunch of changes, it doesn't really strike me as 'new.' This is what I tell my NCO leadership: Make sure you meet the standards, continue to improve and don't worry about the peaks and the valleys in the Army Reserve because they're going to happen. If soldiers are doing the right things, they'll survive."

Survival of the fittest is an achievable goal for the individual soldier, but what about the Reserve unit facing fewer training dollars as well as fewer soldiers to stand in formation on drill weekends?

"Budget cuts are severe and they will hurt some training," Younger admitted. "But I don't think they will hurt the training that's necessary."

According to a Jan. 2 report in *The Army Times*, Reserve units are projected to spend an estimated \$10 billion on training in 1995. Coupled with that, nearly 19,000 Reserve positions are due to be eliminated by the end of the current fiscal year. Long-range, the Pentagon's goal is to cut the Reserve by 40 percent by 1998.

Though the full force of the chopping block is yet to be felt at many units, Younger said now is the time for NCOs to take a second look at their training programs.

"In the past, we've done a lot of training that was nice to know but not necessary for soldiers to perform their jobs," he said. "That kind of training now has to go out the window. What we do now will have to directly relate to the soldier's military function. We just have to work smarter."

Younger said he'd like to see more tactical skills added to unit training programs. "Reservists are excellent at their technical jobs, but what they don't always do well is their combat survivability skills. We need to have more NCO leadership that pays attention to CSS and then impresses upon commanders to keep up those skills."

"Overall, I think soldiers are really grasping for the right kind of training in areas they never asked for before," he added. "They want to be ready if they get called up."

Another area of concern on the minds of many Reserve NCOs is attendance at Noncommissioned Officers Educa-

tion System (NCOES) schools and, consequently, promotion. With the recent Sergeant Major of the Army review of NCOES which, among 17 other recommendations, eliminates NCOES failures from promotion lists, more NCOs in the Reserve are realizing the importance of PLDC, BNCOC, ANCOC and other leadership courses.

Despite the increasing flood of requests for military schooling, unit training NCOs need to be much more prudent in selecting NCOES candidates, Younger noted.

"We have some soldiers who are going to BNCOC, for instance, and then one month later they're out of the Army," he said. "We don't need that. We need to train only those

soldiers who are going to be around. In this way, I think the drawdown will make better managers out of all of us.

"Though the number of Reserve Component slots for NCOES courses has not increased, the demand for the training has. Previously, a lot of Reserve NCOs had the mindset that they really didn't need NCOES, so they'd lay back and take it easy. But now the light has come on and there's more pressure on them because if they don't go to school they won't get promoted and if they don't get promoted the Retention Control Points will catch up with them and they'll be out. But I say, show us you're the best soldier and you can go. Competition for schools is increasing. This can only make the Reserves better.

Younger leaned forward in his chair again to drive home one last point: "Sure the future's going to be tough, but the good Reservists will hang in there." ■

# ***Guard Flexes OOTW Muscle***

By SSG David Abrams

**W**hen 400 soldiers from the Army National Guard hit the sands of the Sinai in January, they were helping to propel America's citizen-soldier force into a future as bright as the Southwest Asia sun, said the Guard's senior enlisted official.

According to CSM Larry Pence, command sergeant major of the Office of the Director, Army National Guard, the ARNG soldiers—who, for the first time, comprised more than 70 percent of the latest Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) rotation in the Sinai—demonstrated just